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RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 7576
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 4623
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN 0491
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 4958
RUEHNM/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 6283
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7241
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 2005
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L LA PAZ 000708

SIPDIS

FOR LAC/AA D. KENNEDY-IRAHETA, E. LANDAU; LAC/SA J. LAWRENCE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [ENVR](#) [BL](#)

SUBJECT: USAID BOLIVIA: IN THE CLEAR OR IN THE CROSSHAIRS?

REF: LA PAZ 674

Classified By: A/EcoPol Chief Joe Relk for reasons 1.4 (b,d.)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY. Ten days after several El Alto leaders called for the expulsion of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) from their city (ref), other leaders, including the mayor, are coming to the organization's defense. Oscar Chirinos, an El Alto Movement Towards Socialism's (MAS) congressman, claimed in a radio interview that he and "thirty thousand" residents signed a petition for the removal of the organization and sent it to President Evo Morales. Our El Alto contacts contend the figure is a "complete lie" and that most neighborhoods in El Alto resented Chirinos "driving away" projects from the city. El Alto Mayor Fanor Nava defended USAID's programs in El Alto and personally called USAID Country Director to say he supported the work being done by USAID and affiliate organizations. Meanwhile, Eva Golinger, whose El Alto presentation on "U.S. Interference in Latin America" sparked Chirinos' anti-USAID campaign, gave an interview with Telesur on May 13. Minister of the Presidency Juan Ramon Quintana also gave an interview with Telesur the same day. Both attacked USAID and said it was an "arm of the USG" aimed at "dividing the country." END SUMMARY.

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EL ALTO'S USAID DECISION
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¶2. (C) Four days after the initial threats to expel USAID, El Alto held a scheduled-election for president of the neighborhoods association (FEJUVE). Ruben Mendoza won the position and is known as a "friend" of USAID. Mendoza has worked with USAID programs in infrastructure development, Food for Work programs, and more. Contacts say that further community meetings have shown anger and resentment towards Chirinos' attempts to "drive away" development projects from El Alto. Mayor Nava defended the non-profit presence in El Alto and confirmed his support with a call to USAID Country Director.

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CHIRINOS' "GRINGO" GRUDGE
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¶3. (C) Chirinos' radio interview criticized USAID and the U.S. in general. He claimed that USAID was a "political arm" of the USG and wants to divide the city. Parroting claims originally made by Minister Quintana in August 2007, he added that only 20 percent of the U.S. Congressionally-delegated funds for Bolivia actually arrive in the country. He claimed that he and "thirty-thousand" others had signed a letter delivered to Morales. When asked about the President's response to the letter Chirinos said that Morales "is aware of it."

¶4. (C) Emboffs have met with Chirinos several times in the past few years; he consistently asked for USAID support for his projects. In a meeting in December 2007, he complained to poloff about the "20 percent" only reaching the Bolivian people and said he wanted to organize a "fact-finding mission to USAID" to further investigate. Poloff explained the figure was not true and had been incorrectly stated by Minister of the Presidency Quintana. Surprisingly, Chirinos harshly criticized Quintana, saying he was "dangerous, couldn't be trusted, and mislead the (MAS) party, Morales in particular."

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USAID: QUINTANA'S WHITE WHALE
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¶5. (C) Quintana himself has not given up his fight against USAID. Both he and Golinger gave interviews May 13 to Telesur regarding USAID's "support of the opposition." Golinger claimed that "USAID funded the opposition in the name of democracy," but "really sought to divide the country." Quintana said the Bolivian government was "not surprised...by Eva's revelations regarding USAID's work to politically undermine the GOB." Quintana further said the government "rejected the strategy of political suffocation" of USAID and highlighted Chirinos' campaign to expel the organization from El Alto.

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COMMENT
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¶6. (C) Chirinos' long-held mistrust of USAID never stopped him from asking for funding. The lack of funding for his projects and the chance at political glory likely propelled his interest in removing USAID. As the situation has progressed, other El Alto community leaders have made their opinion known, albeit in more subtle, civic ways. While Post does not feel that Chirinos' threats alone are a serious danger to the USAID mission in Bolivia at this time, public support from Quintana could further encourage Chirinos and his followers to give Morales an ultimatum on the issue. One USAID grantee with long-standing presence in El Alto (Save the Children) discovered anti-U.S. graffiti on their building May 5. USAID considers this an isolated incident, however it has taken steps to create a specialized "warden system" to communicate to all USAID partner offices in El Alto in the event of further incidents. END COMMENT.

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